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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 28, 2006

## NJMC Breaks Ground on New ‘Green’ Science Center and Observatory

LYNDHURST, N.J. – A new era for Meadowlands education began today with the groundbreaking for the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission Center for Environmental and Scientific Education. The NJMC’s Board of Commissioners, Meadowlands District legislators, local school officials, and representatives from Ramapo College of New Jersey were among the officials on hand at Richard W. DeKorte Park for the historic event.

“The sky’s the limit in more ways than one for our new Center, as people of all ages can use this new facility to learn about the marshes around us as well as the celestial bodies in the sky,” said NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin, also the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner. “This building will be constructed to the highest Green Building standards, setting an example for the rest of the Meadowlands, while continuing our educational relationship with Ramapo College. The new Center for Environmental and Scientific Education is the cornerstone of ensuring that future generations in the Meadowlands have a better understanding the world around them and its value to us all.”

The new, environmentally-friendly facility will be approximately 10,000 square-feet and include three classrooms, a wet laboratory, a classroom/laboratory, administrative offices, storage space and a lobby. It will be constructed in accordance with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design’s Gold standards. These design elements include solar panels, maximum utilization of natural light, recycling of gray water, and using environmentally-friendly building materials. The trademark of this facility will be an observatory with a state-of-the-art telescope and a six-meter retractable dome. Construction is expected to be complete in August 2007, and the construction costs will be funded through the NJMC’s Meadowlands Area Grants for Natural and Economic Transformation (MAGNET) fund.

“Increased interest in environmental studies, particularly in the Meadowlands area, has led to more students and guests coming to our facilities and achieving a better comprehension of how vital this region is. In fact, this campus has become so popular that we have had to turn away people for our classes and other events because registration fills up so quickly,” said NJMC Commissioner Leonard R. Kaiser. “This new facility will allow us to accommodate more people who want to learn about the Meadowlands, as well as offer one of the few observatories in northern New Jersey.”

The existing buildings at DeKorte Park – the NJMC’s administrative building and the NJMC Meadowlands Environment Center – were constructed in 1982. Both buildings are registered with the U.S. Green Building Council and will be retrofitted to meet LEED standards for existing buildings. In addition, the NJMC’s Environment Center is planning a number of special events for next year to mark its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

“Over the past four years, we have developed a strong partnership between Ramapo College of New Jersey and the Meadowlands Commission,” said Dr. Peter Mercer, President of Ramapo College. “The community, as well as faculty and students, have benefited immensely from this partnership, through programs for elementary and high school students, senior citizens and people with disabilities, field experience for Ramapo students, and support for faculty projects. The new facility, with classrooms, a laboratory and an observatory, will expand our partnership, allowing for even greater articulation between our two institutions and outreach to more citizens of northern New Jersey.”

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